

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

news release

For Immediate Release (prepared February 7, 1979)

ANDRUS CAUTIONS AGAINST 1979 DEPLETION OF SALMON STOCKS

Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus today cautioned the Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council against a proposal to extend the 1977-78 Salmon Plan through the 1979 season.

"Substantial problems exist with many of the Pacific salmon stocks," Andrus told John Martinis, Council chairman.

Extending the current salmon take through 1979 "could be disastrous," Andrus said.

Referring to data documenting the predicted low abundance levels of Pacific coho and chinook salmon stocks, Andrus wrote Martinis:

"I would like to emphasize two of the issues with which I have a particular concern: conservation and the allocation between ocean and inside fishermen.

"I believe that significant reductions in the impact of the ocean fisheries beyond those proposed are required to reduce the serious conservation and management problems anticipated in the coastal streams and rivers and the Puget Sound system. If management proceeds on the same basis as in 1977-1978, natural stock escapements past the ocean fisheries will, in most instances, be far below the level needed to meet spawning requirements.

"This is certainly the case for Washington and Oregon coastal streams, the Columbia River, and Willapa Bay. At this time, inadequate information is available from Northern California for Interior to make an independent determination about Northern California stocks. However, California through public statements has acknowledged that a serious problem exists.

"In Puget Sound, sufficient coho are likely to enter the Juan de Fuca Strait to meet spawning requirements. Nevertheless the incidental catch of coho in net fisheries there and in Northern Puget Sound, targeting on the huge pink salmon runs, is likely to reduce that level to less than spawning requirements. This will reduce the reproductive capacity of these natural stocks and is likely to result in a continuation of the severe conservation problem for at least another cycle.

"The statutory mandates under the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 require the Council to take account of conservation requirements of the resource and other applicable law, including those which provide for certain of the fisheries in inside waters.

"We cannot expect the inside net fishermen, sportsmen and the treaty Indians to bear the conservation burden for all. This becomes particularly serious and potentially explosive in years such as this, when many of the returning salmon runs are expected to be smaller than normal, perhaps not meeting escapement targets even if net fisheries are closed. Fairness alone requires that the ocean fisheries bear their fair share of the conservation burden."

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